



# *The Insider*

[www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski)

## **Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10**

**April 3, 2009**

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov) or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See the schedule below for details.

---

### **Mickey's Blog: A Stimulating Week**

---

Yesterday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, we passed a \$2 Billion Stimulus Bill through the Michigan Legislature. That was on top of a \$900 million Transportation Stimulus Bill we passed last week and that the Governor signed into law on Tuesday.

These bills will put people to work building and repairing roads and bridges, weatherizing homes, improving water quality and cleaning up pollution, improving schools, retraining laid off workers, and boosting food stamps and supports for people laid off and hurt by the economic crisis.

My priority was to get the bills passed without getting bogged down in partisanship or mindless delay.

When my Republican colleagues insisted on creating a new committee to review the stimulus bills, I objected. I was afraid an additional committee would slow us down and delay the chance to put hurting people back to work now.

I voted against creation of the committee, and dared my colleagues to prove me wrong by passing the package by April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the day transportation bids would be opened. I walked over to Mike Bishop, the Senate Majority Leader, after the vote. I told him I wouldn't have done it that way, but that we would find a way to make it work. He assured me he was not interested in delay, but just wanted better oversight.

I am lucky to have a great relationship with Ron Jelinek, the Republican Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. I am the Democratic vice chair, and we have worked closely together for a decade. He was appointed Chair and I was named Vice Chair of the Special Committee. We decided to run the bills from the new committee straight to the full Appropriations Committee, and not through a second subcommittee. That eliminated delay. We decided that if anyone had concerns about any portion of the bills, we would separate out those items and deal with them later.

That was a key early decision. And it paid off later. When the House passed the Stimulus bill, they extracted a \$25 million item for school technology grants. They decided to transfer the money for that item into the School Aid Fund budget bill that will be voted on in July. But several Senators wanted to approve at least half of that money now.

That disagreement had the potential to derail the Stimulus bill for at least three weeks.

Rather than hold \$2 Billion in spending hostage over a dispute regarding a \$25 million item, we just agreed to leave that item out so we could give it special attention later. Score one for the House.

Then when some Senators raised questions about \$108 million in state energy grants, we followed the same approach, separating it from the bill so we can give it individual closer attention later. The House could hardly object.

When the \$900 million Transportation Stimulus bill passed March 31<sup>st</sup>, I apologized publicly to my Republican colleagues for doubting them. I said my fears that the new committee would slow us down proved to be unwarranted, and that we had passed the bill one week ahead of the deadline I had set. I congratulated and thanked them for being fair and bi-partisan.

I am not bashful about telling them when I think they are wrong. Only a real friend does that. But I also have to be man enough to admit it when I am wrong. I think that happens far too rarely in politics.

We will have further stimulus bills to debate, and the next ones will have far more state discretion, and we will certainly have disagreements and spirited debates. But we have some momentum from the way we have cooperated to date, and I am hopeful that we will work together when things get controversial. I did call for us to address the disagreements over the extracted \$25 million for Education Technology and the \$108 million for State Energy Grants by the 24<sup>th</sup> of April. I suggested that half of the \$25 million and \$26 million of the \$108 million pots are allocated to locals by formula, and that we could separate those portions out and pass a \$38 million dollar supplemental bill by April 24<sup>th</sup>. That is that same time-honored approach, of setting aside disagreements to work on things you can agree upon.

That's how you eat an elephant. One bite at a time.

---

## **Mickey's Ends and Notes**

---

### **FEDERAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT WILL HELP MICHIGAN FAMILIES**

The billions of dollars the state is estimated to receive through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will help Michigan citizens and families by putting people to work, by protecting health care for the vulnerable, making college more affordable, and keeping our communities safe. Funds are available through competitive grant opportunities. More information on recovery programs that will benefit citizens can be found at [www.michigan.gov/recovery](http://www.michigan.gov/recovery).

### **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES TO REPEAL DRUG INDUSTRY IMMUNITY**

The Michigan House of Representatives took a stand last week for Michigan residents who have been harmed by dangerous prescription drugs by voting to repeal a state law that gives drug companies complete immunity when their products harm or kill someone. The House took action to end drug industry immunity in 2007, but the plan met with opposition in the Michigan Senate.

The plan that passed the Michigan House will:

- Repeal a 1996 law granting immunity to drug companies. Passed by then-Governor John Engler and the Republican-controlled Legislature, the law gives companies complete immunity in Michigan when their products harm or kill if the drug has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Make the repeal retroactive so Michigan residents who have been harmed by dangerous drugs since 1996 can hold drug companies accountable.
- Include drug companies in the Consumer Protection Act, from which they are exempt.

Michigan is the only state in the nation where drug companies are not held to the same consumer-protection standards that other businesses must adhere to and it is important that we correct this and hold companies accountable for any harm they have caused Michigan families. I have supported this legislation in the past and will continue to urge my Senate colleagues to take it up.

### **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONSIDERS BILL TO HELP AUTO SUPPLIERS**

Last week, the House of Representatives passed a measure in committee that would change the way the state provides tax credits to auto suppliers so companies can get the money more quickly. The proposal would give auto suppliers who already receive multiyear Michigan Economic Growth Authority tax credits all the money up front before 2011.

The proposal is aimed at helping Michigan auto suppliers who have been hurt by the industry slowdown. Auto suppliers would have to be likely to retain jobs specified in original agreements with the state to get the tax credits advanced. This measure could soon come up for a vote on the House floor.

### **MICHIGAN OFFERS ONE STOP SHOPPING FOR BUSINESS**

Governor Jennifer Granholm announced last month the Michigan Business One Stop, a program that reforms the way companies can do business in Michigan, providing a single source for government information and services they need.

Michigan Business One Stop is an online service that allows users who want to start, operate or expand a business in Michigan. On the website, business owners can apply and renew permits and licenses, file annual reports, pay unemployment taxes and any other fees that they are subject to under Michigan law.

Information is shared across state departments with an easy e-payment system and business information about transaction status is provided in a new, paperless environment. In addition, Michigan Business One Stop offers a consolidated call center housed in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and a Michigan business ombudsman to assess business issues and help mediate solutions so that businesses and state agencies can move forward in a coordinated fashion. For more information, check out the Michigan Business One Stop website, which can be found at [www.michigan.gov/business](http://www.michigan.gov/business).

### **FEDERAL PLAN TO HELP FAMILIES STAY IN HOMES**

President Barack Obama announced a plan last month that would help millions of homeowners who face home foreclosures to stay in their homes if they made a good faith effort to stay current on their mortgage payments.

The comprehensive plan would:

- Offer a loan modification plan through a shared effort with lenders to reduce interest payments, and offer incentives to mortgage providers and borrowers;
- Create clear and consistent guidelines for loan modifications;
- Require participation of lenders who have recently received money from the federal government;
- Allow for loan modifications of home mortgages during bankruptcy;

- Strengthen ‘Hope for Homeowners’ and other FHA Loan programs;
- And support local communities and help displaced renters.

In addition, the plan would provide access to low-cost refinancing options for responsible homeowners suffering from falling home prices. The plan helps homeowners who do not currently qualify for refinancing because they do not have 20 percent equity in their home to qualify so that they can lower their monthly payments and stay in their homes.

For more information these proposals, please visit the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development website at <http://www.hud.gov>.

---

## 2010 Census Information

---

Several of my constituents have contacted me with concerns over the validity of forms that they received in the mail. The following information was provided to me by the United States Census Bureau and may help clarify some of your concerns.

### **THE 2010 CENSUS - MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT**

The Census Bureau is now conducting a complete accounting of all residents of the United States. This information is used to help key decision-makers understand what your community needs. You may have already received your census form – if not you will soon. Fill out the form and return it to make sure your voice counts.

#### **Why Should You Answer the Census?**

Businesses and corporations rely on census data to compare industries and locations, develop business plans, and locate and attract investments.

#### **Why Should You Answer the Census?**

\$300 billion dollars in federal funds is distributed every year across the country for roads, healthcare, programs for seniors and more – all based on census numbers. By taking just a few minutes to mail back your questionnaire, YOU can ensure that your community gets heard.

*Because we’ve had a census every 10 years since 1790, we know how far America has come.*

---

### **WHAT’S ON THE CENSUS FORM?**

The 2010 Census will have one of the shortest census questionnaires in the history of the United States. It asks only a few simple questions about each of the persons living in your household including name, age/date of birth, relationship, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and whether you sometimes live or stay somewhere else; and just 4 questions about the household in general.

The census form will take only about 10 minutes to complete.

## **ANSWERING THE CENSUS IS SAFE**

By law, the Census Bureau cannot share your individual records with any other government agency, including welfare agencies, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Internal Revenue Service, courts, police, and the military. Census workers must be sworn to secrecy before they see the numbers. If someone gave out any information they saw on a form, he/she could face up to a \$250,000 fine and/or a five-year prison term.

## **Why Conduct the 2010 Census?**

The U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 2) requires that a census be done every 10 years to apportion the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. Therefore, it is crucial that the 2010 Census count people once, only once, and in the right place.

---

## **Who is counted ON CENSUS DAY, APRIL 1, 2010?**

Every 10 years, the Census Bureau conducts a complete accounting of every resident in the United States, no matter where they live or what language they speak. The 2010 Census won't miss people on the road: Census takers will interview people staying at campgrounds, fairs, and marinas as well as people staying at emergency and transitional shelters, soup kitchens, and targeted outdoor locations.

People living on military installations and on military ships will also be included in the 2010 Census as well as military personnel and federal civilian government employees stationed overseas.

---

## **Different Ways to Use The 2010 Census**

- Reapportionment of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives
  - Drawing school district boundaries
  - Designing facilities for people with disabilities, the elderly, or children
  - Understanding labor supply, urban planning, and designing public safety strategies
  - Planning health and educational services for people with disabilities
- 

## **When will the 2010 Census be conducted?**

**March, 2010:** Delivery of the Census Questionnaires to every address in the United States by the United States Postal Service.

**APRIL 1, 2010 CENSUS DAY** – This is the day the Census Bureau sets as reference date for collecting your information.

**Mid-March through Late April:** The American Public returns their completed 2010 Census Questionnaire via the US Mail.

**Late April-Early July 2010:** NON-RESPONSE FOLLOW UP. Canvassers will visit all households who did not return their Questionnaire by mail. Canvassers will collect the information in person.

**December 31, 2010:** Apportionment counts delivered to President.

**April 1, 2011:** All states receive redistricting counts.

---

## Coffee Hours

---

\*In response to requests from constituents, I have added coffee hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office.

<b>April 27</b> <b>1:30-2:30 p.m.</b>  Location: Senator Switalski's District Office (31513 Gratiot, Suite B) Roseville	<b>Stay tuned for future scheduled coffee hours.</b>
--	--

---

## Mickey's TV Insider Show

---

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

### **Sterling Heights**

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Utica**

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Clinton Township**

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Roseville**

Various Times-check local listings  
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

---

## Contact My Office

---

**Website:** <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski>

**Email:** [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov)

### **Lansing Office**

Senator Mickey Switalski  
Senate District 10  
410 Farnum  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

(866) 303-0110 toll free  
(517) 373-7315  
Fax-(517) 373-3126

### **District Office**

31513 Gratiot, Suite B  
Roseville, MI 48066

Monday through Friday  
9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

(586) 294-0925 phone  
Fax- (586) 294-0985